Missouri

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

(RSB)

Client Handbook

for Vocational Rehabilitation

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CLIENT HANDBOOK

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What is Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a program that provides the services, equipment, and training you need to get a job, return to a job, keep a job, or get a better job. In Missouri, a state agency called Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) delivers VR services for people with visual disabilities.

Who can get VR services?

To get vocational rehabilitation services from RSB, you must:

- Have a visual impairment or disability which severely limits your ability to get or keep a job. We serve people with all disabilities, but one of them must be visual.
- Need VR services to prepare for work, or to get or keep a job.

How do I find out if I qualify for VR services?

Call RSB at 1-800-592-6004:

1. You will reach a phone menu that prompts you to transfer the call to the district office nearest you (see the map on the back cover).
2. The staff person who takes your call will ask you some questions, answer any questions you have, and get your contact information.
3. Soon afterwards, an RSB counselor will contact you to set up an appointment at a time and place that works for you. This first appointment is

usually held in your home, but it can be at an RSB office or another location if you prefer.

Prepare for your first appointment with an RSB counselor:

Before the appointment, complete the VR Checklist on pages 26-30 of this handbook. It lists documents to gather and bring with you, if possible, such as recent medical records, especially the results of any eye exams. School and work records are also good to have at the appointment.

How does my rehabilitation begin?

Vocational rehabilitation usually starts with your first interview with

an RSB counselor. RSB counselors are professionals who are trained to work with people with disabilities. If you qualify for VR services, the counselor will help you create a plan to reach your work goals. At this appointment:

1. You will discuss your strengths and plans for entering or re-entering the workplace with your counselor.
2. The counselor will gather information from you, including the medical, school, and work records you brought with you.
3. You will decide whether or not to apply for VR services. If you

decide to apply, you will sign an application for services at this meeting and the process will begin.

Find out if you qualify for VR services

We will determine if you are eligible as quickly as possible. Then, your counselor will send you a letter that tells if you qualify or not.

The two most important factors are your visual condition and its impact on your ability to work. If the medical records you give at the first appointment are not enough to verify your visual eligibility,:

- Your counselor may ask you to sign a release of information form so we can get eye records from your doctor
- If no recent eye records are available, we may ask you to have a vision test or eye exam at no cost to you

If I qualify for VR services, what happens next?

Your counselor will be your partner on your journey to employment. They will help you gather information so you can make informed choices and decide for yourself what direction your journey will take. Your counselor can help you make decisions, if needed.

If you receive Social Security Disability, one thing to consider may be how work will affect your benefits. Benefits counseling is available to help you make informed decisions about this. Your counselor can help you get benefits counseling.

You will create a plan for employment.

Creating this plan will require you to make many decisions such as on your work interests, your career goals, the type of services you need, and the providers of those services.

You will build your plan step-by-step:

Get to know yourself. It's important to understand your interests, strengths, and abilities. You and your counselor will evaluate these things, sometimes with the aid of tests or other services.

Learn about the work that you have chosen to raise your chances of being successful. If you wish to work in a career that is not available in your area, you will have to consider moving. If you don't want to move, you will have to consider the types of work available in your local area. Your counselor can help you find information about jobs in your local area and throughout Missouri.

Set an employment goal. You will consider all the information you've gathered and make an informed choice about the employment goal that is right for you. Your counselor

can help you. Your goal should be as clear and specific as you can make it. You have put a lot of time and thought into choosing it, and it's crucial to successfully finding work.

Choose the services and service providers necessary for your success. Your counselor has valuable information and expertise to help you choose. They will give you:

- The names of licensed and contracted service providers
- Information about those providers
- Sometimes, other clients' experiences with the providers

You will choose the services you need and a provider for each service. For example, you might choose to get counseling and guidance, training, transition services (for youth), job placement, and rehabilitation technology.

What if I'm already working?

You may be already working but want to do your job better or move up with your employer. You will follow the same process you've just read about, except for learning about the work. You will still need to evaluate yourself, decide on your goals and choose the services and providers to achieve those

goals. You can move through these steps while you continue to work.

Once I have a plan, how do I keep it moving?

Your counselor will make sure you start getting the services listed on your plan for employment. As partners in this journey, there are certain things you can expect from your counselor and certain things your counselor needs to expect from you.

Your RSB counselor should:

- Have contact with you on a regular basis
    - Arrange regular appointments with you at a convenient place and

help with your transportation as needed

- Help you, as needed, plan for services to reach your employment goals
    - Approve the services in your plan before they are given to you
    - Make sure the services you need are given when you need them
- Review your progress and speak with you about how you are doing in your plan for employment
    - Work with you to make any needed changes in your plan for employment

- Inform you of your rights to appeal any decision made by RSB about your case

Your counselor expects you to:

- Stay in contact with your counselor (in-person or by phone, e-mail, or regular mail)
- Be an active partner in the rehabilitation process, from referral through employment
- Work toward completing your plan
- Be responsible by knowing your planned services, who is providing those services, and who is paying for those services

- Tell RSB about any changes needed in your plan
- Discuss any added service you feel is needed **before** that service starts (RSB cannot pay for any service unless we approve it before the service starts)
- Tell RSB when you complete employment applications, schedule interviews, or when you are hired

How can my plan help me get hired?

As you progress through the services in your plan for employment, you and your

counselor will work together on this very important step—getting a job! Once your job search becomes full-time, you can expect to have more contact with your counselor. You should do as much of the job search for yourself as you can, but your counselor also will be available to help.

The process of finding a job starts at the first appointment with your counselor. From that time on, you should think about finding a job that is right for you. As part of this, you will:

Network with others. One of the most important activities in searching for a job is networking.

Your counselor can be a valuable partner in this effort. It is a natural part of the process for you to make many contacts with people in the workplace.

Get help from service providers. The people who provide your services will also address employment issues with you.

Use services to help your search. Many services can help you find labor market information, job openings, and résumé writing skills. Your counselor can connect you with these services and help keep your job search on track.

Fill out job applications, design

and distribute a resumé, and interview for jobs. Keep your counselor updated on your activities and let them know when you need help.

Once I have a job, what happens to my contact with RSB?

Congratulations on finding a job!

For the first 90 days of employment, stay in close contact with your counselor so they can:

- Offer advice, resources, or services to make sure you perform well at your new job
- Offer problem-solving and answer many "how do I...” questions

- Help both you and your employer find the answers that will make your employment successful

After 90 days of employment, you will tell your counselor if you are performing well and are satisfied with your work.

Your case may be ended, but it can be reopened at any time. For example, we can reopen a case and help if:

- There's a small problem like the need for a new piece of equipment at work
- A larger problem comes up, such as the need for a new, better, or different job

You are not on your own out there. RSB is just a phone call away.

What should I do if I disagree with my counselor?

While it is important to work with your counselor, there may be times when you and your counselor do not agree on a course of action. Most disagreements can be resolved by discussing the situation with your counselor or your counselor's supervisor. They may be willing to consider other possibilities and give valid reasons if alternatives are not appropriate. Most issues can be resolved at this level, but if not, you have the right to request a review of the decision

using any of the below options. You must make the review request in writing within 90 days of the determination date.

- Administrative review, which is an informal meeting with the RSB deputy director or designee. Most appeals are resolved by the administrative review.
- Mediation, conducted by a qualified and trained mediator.
- A due process hearing, which is a more formal process conducted by an impartial hearing officer of your choice, selected from a pool of approved hearing officers. The

impartial hearing officer hears both sides of the issue, weighs the facts of your case, and makes a decision.

To request an administrative review, mediation or due process hearing, within 90 days of the determination date, you must:

- Request the review, mediation, or hearing in writing to the Deputy Director of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind
  P. O. Box 2320
  615 Howerton Court
  Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
- Describe the decision or action you need to have resolved.

- Include your name, address, and telephone number.

At the administrative review or due process hearing, you should:

- Clearly state your concerns and possible solutions.
- Have a clear idea of what the issues are and the desired remedy to your problem/request.
- Bring documentation that supports your position, if appropriate or available.
- If you choose, have a representative (family member, friend, attorney or CAP representative) present.

- Before the review or due process hearing begins, you must present written authorization to discuss confidential information in the presence of counsel or witnesses.

You should notify the impartial hearing officer in advance if you plan to have a representative or witness(es) at your due process hearing.

If you have any questions on your rights about rehabilitation services, contact:

Client Assistance Program (CAP) at

1-800-392-8667

VR Checklist

Before your first appointment, please:

- Answer the questions below and bring this handbook to the appointment
- To speed up the eligibility process, bring copies of the documents listed below

Answer these questions about yourself:

Do you receive any of these benefits? Check all that apply.

- □ Medicaid
- □ Private insurance
- □ Medicare
- □ SSI
- □ SSDI

- □ VA Disability
- □ TANF
- □ Blind Pension
- □ Workers Comp.
- □ Unemployment Insurance

In what ways are you limited in getting or keeping a job?

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you are employed now, what difficulties are you having on the job?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you use a cane, brace, wheelchair, hearing aid, computer, visual aid, or other assistive device?

□ Yes □ No

If Yes, please tell which one(s) you use:

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you are not employed now, what do you see as the advantages of going to work?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What type of work would you like to do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What training or education would prepare you for this type of work?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Bring copies of these documents to the first appointment, if possible:

- □ The most current medical records that show your visual condition and any other disabilities
- □ Your educational history
- □ Your work history (paid or volunteer)
- □ Documents for any of the public benefits listed above, such as an award letter for SSI and/or SSDI benefits

District Offices

Kansas City District

615 E. 13th Street, Room 409
Kansas City, MO 64106
Phone: 816-889-2677
Fax: 816-889-2504

Southeast District

106 Arthur Street, Suite E
Sikeston, MO 63801
Phone: 573-472-5240
Fax: 573-472-5393

Southwest District

149 Park Central Square
Room 640
Springfield, MO 65806
Phone: 417-895-6386
Fax: 417-895-6392

St. Louis North District

9900 Page Ave., Suite 105
St. Louis, MO 63132-1431
Phone: 314-264-7601
Fax: 314-877-1545
TDD: 314-877-1546

St. Louis South District

3867 Magnolia Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63110
Phone: 314-933-7311
Fax: 314-933-7323
TDD: 314-933-7327

Mid-Missouri District

3418 Knipp Drive, Suite A-2
P.O. Box 919
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0919
Phone: 573-751-2714
Fax: 573-526-4526

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Missouri Department of Social Services

Family Support Division

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB)

615 Howerton Court
PO Box 2320
Jefferson City, Mo 65102
(573) 751-4249

Visit the RSB webpage:

http://dss.mo.gov/fsd/rsb/

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Missouri Department of Social Services

Family Support Division

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Call RSB toll-free:

1-800-592-6004

District Offices